

PROVIDING FOR THE ACQUISITION OF LANDS IN THE SOUTHERN
APPALACHIAN MOUNTAINS FOR PARK PURPOSES

JANUARY 29, 1925.—Committed to the Committee of the Whole House on the
state of the Union and ordered to be printed

Mr. ABERNETHY, from the Committee on the Public Lands, sub-
mitted the following

REPORT

[To accompany H. R. 11980]

The Committee on the Public Lands, to whom was referred the bill (H. R. 11980) to provide for the securing of lands in the southern Appalachian Mountains for perpetual preservation as national parks, having considered the same, report it to the House with the recommendation that it do pass with the following amendments:

1. Page 2, line 3, after the comma following the word "Park" insert "and in the Mammoth Cave regions in Kentucky."
2. Page 2, line 3, after the word "and" insert the word "also."
3. Page 2, line 21, strike out the amount of \$15,000 and in lieu thereof insert "\$20,000."

The Secretary of the Interior last year requested five men, expert in park and out-door life, to comprise a committee to study the scenic area of the southern Appalachian Mountains, having in mind selecting areas of national-park standards, to report to him their choice of an area or areas that could be recommended for inclusion in a national-park system.

The agitation for the establishment of parks in the Appalachian Mountains did not come from the sections where the parks are sought to be established, but, as set forth in the report of the Secretary of the Interior, the present national-park system comprises 19 national parks, 18 of these, including 1 in Hawaii and 1 in Alaska, are located west of the Mississippi River, while only 1, the Lafayette National Park, in Maine, is located in the East. These national parks are areas which Congress has set apart because of supreme scenic beauty, remarkable phenomena, or other unusual qualifications for the enjoyment and perpetual use of the American people.

The Interior Department, recognizing the tremendous popularity of the national-park system in its service to the people, have adopted

a definite policy for the creation of additional national parks in the eastern section for the public use and general welfare of its millions of inhabitants. Most of these live in densely populated communities and can not afford the time or the money required to visit the western national parks.

It is pointed out by the Interior Department that the East contributes its share to the upkeep and maintenance of the national park system, and for that reason, too, should be entitled to recognition. Having this in mind, the Secretary of the Interior in the selection of this commission selected outstanding experts on parks and students of out-door life. This commission included the Hon. H. W. Temple, Member of the House of Representatives from Pennsylvania, who was formerly professor of history and political science in Washington and Jefferson College, located at Washington, Pa., and has long been interested in out-door recreational advancement; Maj. W. A. Welch, chief engineer and general manager of the Palisades Interstate Park of New York and New Jersey; Mr. Harlan P. Kelsey, former president of the Appalachian Mountain Club, of Boston, and a well-known landscape architect; and Mr. William C. Gregg, a prime mover of the National Arts Club, of New York, and a student of recreational development through parks, and a director of the National Park Association; Col. Glenn S. Smith, acting chief topographic engineer of the Geological Survey, and representing the Secretary of the Interior on the committee.

These members served on this commission without remuneration and at their own expense and made an extensive investigation of certain areas, to wit, the Blue Ridge Mountains in Virginia and the Great Smoky Mountains in Tennessee and North Carolina, and some other areas, and made a report to the Secretary of the Interior, which is set out in full in this report.

This bill gives authority to the Secretary of the Interior to have the areas named in the bill investigated as to the boundaries and the means of obtaining areas as national parks. The bill as reported from the committee has the approval of the Secretary of the Interior, the President, and has been unanimously reported from the Public Lands Committee.

The report of the Southern Appalachian National Park Committee in full follows:

The members of the committee appointed by you and designated as the Southern Appalachian National Park Committee, in accordance with your instructions, have spent the past eight months investigating the southern Appalachian Mountain region with a view of determining whether areas exist of sufficient size, containing scenery of such grandeur, and at the same time typical of the region, which are suitable to be considered as a site for a national park.

Nature calls us all, and the response of the American people has been expressed in the creation so far of 19 national parks. All but one are west of the Mississippi River. The two-thirds of our population living east of the Mississippi has contented itself with a few State parks, not knowing that in the southern Appalachian ranges there are several areas which fill the definition of a national park because of beauty and grandeur of scenery, presence of a wonderful variety of trees and plant life, and possibilities of harboring and developing the animal life common in the precolonial days but now nearly extinct.

It has not been generally known that eastern parks of national size might still be acquired by our Government. The committee has been impressed with the amount of interest manifested in all sections of the East in the proposed establishment of a national park in the southern Appalachian region, and this interest

has resulted in numerous requests that the committee inspect various areas. Many of these requests pertained to localities that have abundant scenic features but which are not of sufficient size to warrant their being considered for a national park. Every effort has been made to consider carefully the merits of the various proposed sites, and wherever there was evidence that an area seemed to justify the committee in making a personal inspection, visits have been made either by the committee as a whole or by a delegation from it. Many of the areas in these mountains having unquestionable national-park features are now in the national forests under Government control and so available for recreational use. The committee is not disposed to suggest a change in their present status.

We inspected the northern part of Georgia, whose fine mountains blend with the highland region of southern North Carolina. We ascended Mount Mitchell and viewed the splendid Black Mountain range north of Asheville. We went over carefully the Grandfather Mountain region, which for our study included the beautiful country from Blowing Rock to remarkable Linville Gorge. We responded to the call of the poet—to see Roan Mountain if we would really see the southern Appalachians. We went to Knoxville and from there to the tops of "the Big Smokies," which carry on their crest the boundary line between North Carolina and Tennessee. We went into Virginia to inspect that portion of the Blue Ridge on the east side of the Shenandoah Valley which extends from Front Royal to Waynesboro. Some members of the committee also visited Cumberland Gap, southern West Virginia, northern Alabama, and eastern Kentucky. Several areas were found that contained topographic features of great scenic value, where waterfalls, cascades, cliffs, and mountain peaks with beautiful valleys lying in their midst gave ample assurance that any or all of these areas were possible for development into a national park which would compare favorably with any of the existing national parks in the West. All that has saved these near-by regions from spoliation for so long a time has been their inaccessibility and the difficulty of profitably exploiting the timber wealth that mantles the steep mountain slopes. With rapidly increasing shortage and mounting values of forest products, however, we face the immediate danger that the last remnants of our primeval forests will be destroyed, however remote on steep mountain side or hidden away in deep lonely cove they may be.

The conditions in the East where all land is held in private ownership, as compared with those existing in the West when national parks were created from Government-owned lands, has made our problem a difficult one. The density of population, together with the commercial development in progress or in prospect, often practically prohibited the selection of areas of great natural beauty which if located remote from such development would have been seriously considered.

It is the opinion of the committee that a park in the East should be located if possible where it will benefit the greatest number and it should be of sufficient size to meet the needs as a recreational ground for the people not only of to-day but of the coming generations. The committee therefore decided that no site covering less than 500 square miles would be considered. This eliminated a large number of proposed areas and allowed the committee to concentrate its efforts on a few that appeared to be possible sites on account of their size, location, and favorable scenic features. These sites have therefore been thoroughly examined.

The committee laid down a few simple requirements for its guidance in seeking an area which could be favorably reported to you for the possible consideration of Congress:

1. Mountain scenery with inspiring perspectives and delightful details.
2. Areas sufficiently extensive and adaptable so that annually millions of visitors might enjoy the benefits of outdoor life and communion with nature without the confusion of overcrowding.
3. A substantial part to contain forests, shrubs, and flowers, and mountain streams, with picturesque cascades and waterfalls overhung with foliage, all untouched by the hand of man.
4. Abundant springs and streams available for camps and fishing.
5. Opportunities for protecting and developing the wild life of the area and the whole to be a natural museum, preserving outstanding features of the southern Appalachians as they appeared in the early pioneer days.
6. Accessibility by rail and road.

We have found many areas which could well be chosen, but the committee was charged with the responsibility of selecting the best, all things considered. Of these several possible sites the Great Smokey Mountains easily stand first, because of the height of mountains, depth of valleys, ruggedness of the area, and the unexampled variety of trees, shrubs, and plants. The region includes

Mount Guyot, Mount Le Conte, Clingmans Dome, and Gregory Bald and may be extended in several directions to include other splendid mountain regions adjacent thereto.

The Great Smokies have some handicaps which will make the development of them into a national park a matter of delay; their very ruggedness and height make road and other park development a serious undertaking as to time and expense. The excessive rainfall also (not yet accurately determined) is an element for future study and investigation in relation both to the development work, subsequent administration, and recreational use as a national park.

The Blue Ridge of Virginia, one of the sections which had your committee's careful study, while secondary to the Great Smokies in altitude and some other features, constitute, in our judgment, the outstanding and logical place for the creation of the first national park in the southern Appalachians. We hope it will be made into a national park, and that its success will encourage the Congress to create a second park in the Great Smokey Mountains, which lie some 300 miles distant southwest.

It will surprise the American people to learn that a national park site with fine scenic and recreational qualities can be found within a three-hour ride of our National Capital and within a day's ride of 40,000,000 of our inhabitants. It has many canyons and gorges, with beautiful cascading streams. It has some splendid primeval forests, and the opportunity is there to develop an animal refuge of national importance. Along with the whole southern Appalachians, this area is full of historic interest, the mountains looking down on valleys with their many battle fields of Revolutionary and Civil War periods, and the birthplaces of many of the Presidents of the United States. Within easy access are the famous caverns of the Shenandoah Valley.

The greatest single feature, however, is a possible skyline drive along the mountain top following a continuous ridge and looking down westerly on the Shenandoah Valley from 2,500 to 3,500 feet below, and also commanding a view of the Piedmont Plain stretching easterly to the Washington Monument, which landmark or our National Capitol may be seen on a clear day. Few scenic drives in the world could surpass it.

We therefore recommend the creation of a national park in the part of the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia above described, and shown approximately on the accompanying map.

We have not attempted to estimate the cost of acquiring this area as we are not sure that it falls within the scope of our committee's work. We suggest, however, that a spirit of constructive cooperation on the part of the State of Virginia and among some of the large landowners of this region with whom we have been in touch promises reasonable prices and perhaps a number of donations.

We suggest that, if Congress thinks favorable of this proposed park site, a commission be appointed to handle the purchase and to solicit contributions and to arrange condemnation proceedings if the State of Virginia deems it wise. The creation of such a park may well be made contingent on a limited total land cost.

Respectfully submitted.

H. W. TEMPLE, *Chairman.*
GLEN S. SMITH, *Secretary.*
W. A. WELCH.
HURLAN P. KELSEY.
WILLIAM C. GREGG.

Approved:

DECEMBER 12, 1924.

HUBERT WORK,
Secretary of the Interior

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,
Washington, January 26, 1925.

HON. N. J. SINNOTT,
Chairman Committee on the Public Lands,
House of Representatives.

MY DEAR MR. SINNOTT: I have before me your request of January 6 for report on H. R. 10738, Sixty-eighth Congress, second session, "To provide for the securing of lands in the southern Appalachian Mountains for perpetual preservation as a national park." The purpose of the bill is to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to report to Congress on the boundaries and area of such portions of these mountains as may be recommended by him to be acquired for national-park purposes and the best means for acquiring such lands. It further authorizes him to appoint an advisory commission of five park experts, four of whom will serve without pay, to effect these purposes, and a small appropriation of not

exceeding \$10,000 for the commission's expenses, and to secure such options as in the opinion of the Secretary may be desirable.

The present national-park system comprises 19 national parks. Eighteen of these, including one in Hawaii and one in Alaska are located west of the Mississippi River, while only one, the Lafayette National Park in Maine, is located in the East. These national parks are areas which Congress has set apart because of supreme scenic beauty, remarkable phenomena, or other unusual qualifications for the perpetual use and enjoyment of the American people. The large number of national parks in the West may be attributed to the fact that they could be carved from the public domain without expense to the Government in the acquisition of land.

East of the Mississippi, however, the situation is different. No Government-owned lands, aside from those acquired under the provisions of the so-called Weeks Act for forest purposes, are available and such national parks as would be created by Congress in the East would have to be acquired by purchase with Federal funds or through donation. Lafayette National Park presents an interesting example, as all its area is comprised of lands donated, or lands purchased from donated funds, contributed by public-spirited citizens of the United States.

Lafayette is the only national park in the East. Yet east of the Mississippi we have a dense population containing 70 per cent of the inhabitants of the entire country.

Recognizing the tremendous popularity and value of the national park system in its service to our people, it is my opinion that a definite policy should be adopted by the Government for the creation of additional national parks in the eastern section for the public use and general welfare of its millions of inhabitants. Most of these live in densely populated communities and can not afford the time or the money required to visit the western national parks. The East contributes its share to the upkeep and maintenance of the existing national park system, and for that reason too should be entitled to recognition.

Last year I requested five men expert in park and outdoor matters, headed by Congressman Temple, of Pennsylvania, to comprise a committee to study the scenic areas of the southern Appalachian Mountains, and having in mind established national park standards, to report to me their choice of an area that could be recommended for inclusion in the national park system. Their report to me is attached hereto as Exhibit A.

In brief, their recommendation for first choice, after a careful survey of the region, was for the selection of an area in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia, lying east of the south fork of the Shenandoah River and between Front Royal on the north and Waynesboro on the south—the area mentioned in the bill under consideration, H. R. 10738—although an area including the Great Smokies of North Carolina and Tennessee was recognized as of equal importance. In this selection I concur.

The site in the Blue Ridge Mountains selected by the committee is within a three-hour ride of the National Capital and readily accessible to a population of 40,000,000 people. Its scenic qualities fully measure up to national park standards, and it lies in a region rich in associations with the early history of our country and particularly of the Revolutionary and Civil War periods.

The bill under consideration, if passed by Congress, will enable me to prepare a report to that body with full details as to boundaries, the best means of acquiring the area, and such other data as may be required by the Congress to study and consider this proposal. It is expected that donations of land within this area by the State and private individuals will leave only fragmentary parcels to be otherwise acquired.

I recommend that the bill receive the favorable consideration of your committee. Should it be deemed desirable by Congress to have a similar study and report made on the Great Smokies area of North Carolina and Tennessee, the choice for a second park, it is believed that an additional appropriation of \$5,000 will achieve this purpose.

Under date of January 23, 1925, the Director of the Bureau of the Budget advised as follows with respect thereto:

"I have presented this matter to the President, who has instructed me to advise you that an expenditure of \$15,000 for the purposes indicated will not be in conflict with his financial program. The President desires it specifically understood, however, that this is not to be construed as carrying any commitment as regards his financial program to an expenditure of funds for the purchase of land."

Sincerely yours,

HUBERT WORK.

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